

Betty M. Woodward
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Re: HB 6380

Good evening Appropriations Committee

My name is Betty Woodward. I am 79 years old, mother of five adult children, eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. I am legally blind. I can't believe we're here again and for the same reason -

to appeal to you to allow the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) to remain a separate agency. You have heard, or will hear, some of the situations we face when we lose our vision (slowly, all at once, or never to have it in the first place). We read large print, Braille with slate and stylus and, in many cases, have a reader. We learn to travel with a long white cane or a dog guide. Needless to say, all of this and more happens with the help from trained individuals from BESB - except dog guide training.

We have all been here before - three times, I believe. Many of you who still walk the halls of this building agreed with us - a separate agency with a dedicated Agency Director and staff (and BESB has both) do a better job than breaking up this agency into two directions.

The person who represents the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services is a non-voting member of the Board Of Directors of BESB. To my knowledge this individual has attended one meeting in the six years that I have sat on this Board. It troubles me that Governor Malloy wishes to place part of a well-run agency under another agency head who appears to have little interest in the lives of Connecticut's blind population.

Please listen to us, the blind of this state. We want to learn, grow, work and live normal productive lives. The best way for this to happen is by keeping the Board of Education and Services for the Blind a separate, stand-alone agency. Thank you.

Betty M. Woodward